

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently amended) A process for producing a sodium acrylate polymer by a free-radical polymerization of sodium acrylate with or without other monomers in an aqueous medium, which comprises using sodium acrylate in ~~the~~ a form of an aqueous solution or dispersion obtainable by dissolving or dispersing solid sodium acrylate in ~~an~~ the aqueous medium.

2. (Currently amended) A The process as ~~claimed in~~ of claim 1, wherein the aqueous solution of sodium acrylate ~~used~~ contains from 10 to 100 mol% of sodium acrylate and from 0 to 90 mol% of acrylic acid.

3. (Currently amended) A The process as ~~claimed in~~ of claim 1 ~~or~~ 2, wherein the aqueous solution of sodium acrylate ~~used~~ contains from 10 to 95 mol% of sodium acrylate and from 5 to 90 mol% of acrylic acid.

4. (Currently amended) A The process as ~~claimed in~~ of claim 1 ~~or~~ 2, wherein the aqueous solution of sodium acrylate ~~used~~ contains from 40 to 90 mol% of sodium acrylate and from 10 to 60 mol% of acrylic acid.

5. (Currently amended) A The process as ~~claimed in~~ any of ~~claims~~ claim 1 ~~to~~ 4, wherein the aqueous solution contains from 0.01 to 5 mol% of a monomer containing at least two ethylenically unsaturated double bonds.

6. (Currently amended) A The process as claimed in any of claims claim 1 to 5, wherein the aqueous monomer solution is prepared using solid anhydrous sodium acrylate.

7. (Currently amended) A The process as claimed in any of claims claim 1 to 6, wherein the solid sodium acrylate used has a water content from 0.1% to 10% by weight.

8. (Currently amended) Sodium A sodium acrylate polymer obtainable prepared by the process of claims claim 1 to 7.

9. (Currently amended) The use of solid sodium acrylate for A method of producing polymers by a polymer from solid sodium acrylate comprising dissolving the solid sodium acrylate in water to form an aqueous monomer solution and polymerizing the monomer solution in the presence or absence of other monomers.

10. (Currently amended) A The process according to any of claims claim 1 to 9, wherein the solid sodium acrylate is wholly or partly replaced by another water-soluble salt of acrylic acid.